

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 9 Hunters Way
: Spencers Wood, Berkshire
: RG7 1HW
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Brian Billsberry
DATE SUBMITTED : 11/04/2025

COMMENTS:

I wish to formally object to the planning application for the development of up to 420 dwellings and various other facilities to the south and east of the Basingstoke Road in Spencers Wood.

The reasons for my objections are detailed below:

1. POLICY

There are a number of areas that contravene statements made within the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan 2025 Update, which was only recently submitted for government review.

a. This proposed development was NOT included in the Proposed Development Plan.

b. The Plan recognises at Section 4.51 that the extension of AWE Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) now incorporates the villages of Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. It also states that "No

development is allocated here."

Further, the site was rejected for inclusion in the Local Plan on the grounds it was within the AWE DEPZ, due to safety issues, including the adverse (fatal?) impact on safety and on evacuation plans. This begs the question why this application even being considered? c. Spatial Strategy - SS2 - Scale and location of development proposals:

Spencers Wood is defined in the plan as a "Modest Settlement" for development purposes but, in spite of this, Spencers Wood has already been subjected to an overwhelming level of development over the past 25+ years; to the extent that the rural character of the village is being severely compromised and is already adversely impacting on our enjoyment of our local environment. This very significant development will exacerbate this.

d. Clause 10 further states that "the countryside is not a location where additional development is planned ." The proposed development would remove a very large tract of countryside, which would have an adverse impact on our rural environment and on local wildlife.

e. The loss of this agricultural land, which has historically been used to grow cereal crops, is at odds with current government policy, which aims to increase national self-sufficiency in food production.

f. Village character & Settlement Separation: Under Core Policy CP19, the plan undertakes to ensure the maintenance of meaningful open

countryside between settlements, and the former gap between them, in order to retain a sense of separation between settlements. The proposed development would severely compromise both of these aspects on the boundary between Spencers Wood & Swallowfield.

2. PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

A previous application 11968(?) for a similar housing development on the same site was submitted shortly after we moved into Spencers Wood in 1997 and was rejected. What has changed since then, please?

3. INFRASTRUCTURE

General:

a. Due to the widely acknowledged over-development of Spencers Wood

and our neighbouring villages, traffic levels & congestion in our area has significantly increased and the supply of medical, educational and other services can barely meet demand.

b. It is, therefore, considered essential that, if this proposal is agreed, all supporting infrastructure must be in place before house building commences. If this does not happen, chaos will ensue on our roads and in our medical, educational and other services (see more below)

Traffic Congestion:

The transport statement included in the planning application is factually incorrect in its assessment of the number of vehicles the development would generate. The majority of homes in our area have at least two cars per household, with many households possessing three or more vehicles. This number of vehicles is further increased when traffic due to the businesses, school, care home and other facilities proposed under this application are considered.

Road Safety and Access to Main Roads (A33 & M4):

a. The proposed access points for the development will introduce significant road safety issues, particularly along Basingstoke Road. b. Lambs Lane, Kingsbridge Lane, and Whitehouse Lane are predominantly single-track roads without suitable provision for vehicles to safely pass each other, let alone accommodate increased traffic volumes. These roads also lack footpaths and proper lighting, making them unsafe for pedestrians, particularly children and the elderly.

c. The Beech Hill Road junction with Lambs Lane and Whitehouse Lane is a known accident black spot. There have been numerous serious accidents here in recent years. It is essential that road and pedestrian safety are robustly reviewed and addressed before construction begins.

d. The plans show the only vehicular access from the development is onto the B3349, which is already heavily congested, particularly during peak travel times, when traffic from the south and east use the route as a rat-run to the Reading area & M4. The additional approx. 500+ cars plus other vehicles used by the new residents, proposed businesses and other proposed facilities will only exacerbate this. It has, at times taken me over 30 minutes to travel the one mile from my home to reach Junction 11!

e. Access to the A33 southbound is likely to be via Lambs & Whitehouse Lanes unless better provision is made. These are narrow, single-track lanes with soft verges and are unsuitable for the levels and types of traffic that will ensue. There is already much evidence of the verges being eroded due to lorries having to pull over onto them to pass each other.

f. Vehicle using this route to travel north must then travel 2.5 miles south to the Wellington Farm Shop Roundabout to access the A33 northbound carriageway to access M4 J11. This will not be feasible, especially during peak periods, when I have personally seen the

thbound queue south of the A33 roundabout extend south to about 500 yards north of the Wellington Arms (approx 2.5 miles).

g. Enabling access to the northern carriageway at the A33/Whitehouse Lane junction will further exacerbate the congestion on this road, especially during peak periods.

h. Under the current proposal, most will, therefore, opt to use the already congested B3349 northbound.

Utilities Supply and Emissions:

The proposal does not give confidence that adequate provision has

been made to assure robust supplies of electricity, gas, broadband, water supply, drainage and sewage disposal etc. to cope with the increase in population and other proposed facilities.

Medical/Health Services

The significant increase in population will adversely impact access to already overstretched GP, Dental, Pharmacy, Community Care services and access to Acute and Community hospital services. The creation of a new surgery will not currently address GP service provision due to staffing problems, e.g., Swallowfield Medical Practice has had great difficulty recruiting additional doctors to help them to cope with the high demand on their services.

Education Services Provision

a. The proposal includes provision of a Primary School. I understand from governors of local schools, that the Wokingham Borough schools allocation leader, predicts a surplus of Primary school places in the area and that this may result in the closure of existing primary schools. However, there is a significant demand for secondary, sixth form and SEND provision in our area. This proposal does nothing to address this recognised need.

b. The planning documents states that there has been close collaboration with Lambs Lane Primary school regarding this application. However, the governors of the school describe this statement as a 'complete fabrication'. This raises concern about the reliability and trustworthiness of the developer proposing this development.

c. The knock-on impact of the increased student population created by this development on all other levels of education must be assessed, including Pre-School, Secondary, Post-16 & SEND.

d. Safe travel to & from all these schools must also be addressed.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

a. Air pollution: Air pollution due to the very heavy traffic on the B3349 during peak periods will be increased by the significant increase in traffic created by this development .. creating a health hazard and further degrading our rural environment.

b. Flood Risk & Rivers Pollution: The development's large hard surface area will increase surface water and exacerbate flood risk and run-off into local rivers, increasing the pollution & flood risk.

c. Impact of Flora & Fauna: The loss of what is a significant area of green space and consequent loss of hedgerows etc. will adversely impact on our local flora and our resident and migrating species, e.g., our pollinators, stag beetles, bats, migratory & resident birds & animals etc. There are already unacceptably high numbers of animals and birds being killed on our local roads because their habitat and trails have been eroded, including, deer, rabbits, badgers, pheasants etc.

d. Loss of Village Character & Access to Greenspace: There are now very few areas of woodland and natural green space within a few minutes' walk of my home. This proposal, if approved, would remove yet another huge tract of such land. The proposal to provide green space within the development does not in any meaningful way compensate for the loss of such a large area of green space.

5. AVIATION FUEL LINE SAFETY

a. A significant safety concern for the development is the presence of the high-pressure aviation fuel line running through the site. This must be addressed before work begins on the site.

b. It is noted that the Grazeley Village development was rejected by the Ministry of Defence on safety grounds due to the presence of a

tributary fuel line in that area. Why does this restriction not apply to this development?

Whilst I understand the need for more housing, a development of this size is totally inappropriate, particularly since Spencers Wood and its neighbouring villages have already been subject to more than their fair share of development over the past 20 years or so. This over-development was acknowledged by candidates in the last general and local elections and was a key element in their campaigns. For all the reasons outlined above I sincerely hope that this application is unequivocally rejected.